

SECRET

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
9 November 1961

AD/CI  
(1)

OCI No. 3622/61

Copy No. 35

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Trinidad General Elections of 4 December 1961

1. Offices to be filled: All 30 seats in the legislative council. The last general elections were held in 1956 and the present ones have been postponed as long as legally possible. Trinidad and the adjoining island of Tobago form a constituent unit of the West Indies Federation with full internal self-government.

2. Significance for the United States: The US holds the Chaguaramas Naval Base and radar research facility in Trinidad under the February 1961 US-West Indies Federation Defense Areas Agreement, which also covers electronic research stations in other parts of the Federation. This agreement was reached only after more than two years of acrimonious and frequently broken off talks with Trinidad's Premier Eric Williams, who sought Chaguaramas for the Federal capital.

While both of Trinidad's main parties now publicly uphold the agreement and have reiterated their willingness to contribute to the Western defense effort, both have tended in the course of campaigning to imply that greater US aid should be forthcoming in return for the facilities granted. Furthermore, Jamaica's recent vote to secede from the Federation raises the question of the continuing validity of the agreement with some indications that Williams, if he continues in office, may try to repudiate the agreement or at least extract greater aid in return for continued adherence.

State Department review completed

SECRET

Coming shortly after the Jamaican vote for secession, the local Trinidad election takes on added significance because of Williams' refusal to commit himself to a policy on the Federation until after the election. London hopes he can be persuaded to lead--and the Trinidad party to finance--a strong Federation of Trinidad and the smaller non-viable islands, but he has stated he may prefer having Trinidad secede and become an independent state. Opposition leader Capildeo believes in retaining Trinidad in the Federation.

3. Parties participating:

a. The People's National Movement (PNM), founded by Premier Williams, has been the governing party since 1956. With an estimated active membership of 25,000, it is the best organized party and tends to draw the support of most of the Negro 43 percent of population for whom the PNM symbolizes emancipation from colonialism. The PNM tends to favor economic planning and a strong central government. Fifty-year-old Dr. (of history) Eric Williams--whose domination of the party has never been broken by lesser leaders--is a Negro nationalist

25X6

Formerly vehemently anti-American, he now alternates between friendliness and resentment.

b. The Democratic Labor Party (DLP) is the principal opposition party and similar to the PNM in orientation and program, though somewhat less inclined toward economic planning and a strong central government. It tends to draw the support of the East Indian 36 percent of the population. Long weakened by poor leadership and internal dissension, the DLP appears to have gained strength since 1960, when 41-year-old Dr. (of mathematics) Rudranath Capildeo took over the leadership from Bhadase Maraj--who is still a power among Hindu East Indians and may run as an independent. Dr. Capildeo is generally pro-US, but his views are somewhat confused and he is politically inexperienced

25X6

c. The United Labor Party, formed in the summer of 1961 by Victor Bryan, is a very small, multi-racial, working-class party.

4. Party strengths: Distribution of seats in the legislative council--which then had 24 members and a somewhat different party distribution--following the September 1956 elections was as follows:

<u>Party</u>	<u>Number of Seats</u>
People's National Movement	13
People's Democratic Party (now the DLP)	5
Home Rule Party	2
Trinidad Labor Party	2
Independents	2

5. Election outlook: The PNM is standing on its record, with the DLP claiming it could do the same things better. The DLP is also making side issues of government corruption and of the electoral machinery, which it alleges favors the urban Negroes.

A few months ago the PNM was conceded a clear victory; now, qualified observers feel the outcome is unpredictable. The American consul in Port of Spain estimated in early October that of the 30 seats, only about 11 could be considered safe for the PNM while 7 were almost certainly lost, and the battle would be determined in the remaining 12 marginal constituencies. Premier Williams himself is extremely fearful of losing.

Among the reasons for the diminished prospects for the PNM are splits within the party hierarchy over Williams' dictatorial control of policy, the impact of the corruption issue, and the fact that the East Indian minority forms a more cohesive bloc than the Negroes. Much depends on whether Williams summons his forces to put up a stiff fight, whether the DLP can shape up a better organization in the next few weeks, and whether it can neutralize Williams' control of the police on polling day.

25X1

25X1

Orig:

Dist:

[Redacted Box]  
Acting Assistant Director  
Current Intelligence